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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002124

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2017

TAGS: KWBG PGOV PREL PTER PHUM KPAL IS

SUBJECT: WEST BANK LAND CONFISCATION TAKES ONE STEP CLOSER  
TO E-1 DEVELOPMENT

REF: A. JERUSALEM 01840 (ABU DIS)  
1B. JERUSALEM 1840 (AL-'AZARIYA)  
1C. JERUSALEM 02060 (MA'ALE ADUMIM AND E-1)  
1D. JERUSALEM 02032 (E-1 SEPTEMBER UPDATE)

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Ha'aretz reported October 9 that the GoI confiscated more than 1,100 dunums of Palestinian land to build a road for Palestinians to travel between Abu Dis and Jericho without traversing the E-1 area. PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat issued statements condemning Israeli actions that they describe as "destructive to all the efforts...to realize a two-state solution by having a viable, contiguous Palestinian state." Abu Dis Mayor Jaffal and Ministry of Religious Affairs Assistant Secretary Zuhayka said they would seek legal ways of recovering the confiscated land. The confiscation and road development appear to support Israeli efforts to develop the E-1 area and connect the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc to Jerusalem, effectively cutting the West Bank in half. End Summary.

LAND EXPROPRIATED BY GOI FOR PALESTINIAN ROAD

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12. (U) Ha'aretz newspaper reported October 9 that the GoI issued orders on September 24 to expropriate Palestinian-owned land near the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. According to Ha'aretz, the land being confiscated is slated to be used to construct a new road connecting Palestinian villages east of Jerusalem with Jericho. The route of the new road would run from Abu Dis around the southern end of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc, connecting to Route 1 east of the bloc beyond the planned route of the security barrier and then on to Jericho.

13. (SBU) The IDF ordered the confiscation of 1,128 dunums (approximately 280 acres) plus 800 square meters. This land is in the villages of Abu Dis and Sawahirah, which are between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim; Nabi Musa, a Muslim holy site south of Jericho; and al-Khan al-Ahmar, near the Mishor Adumim industrial complex.

PALESTINIANS PROTEST CONFISCATION,  
PURSUE LEGAL OPTIONS

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14. (U) PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued an October 10 statement condemning the GoI's decision and urging the USG to prevent the confiscation. In a separate statement the same day, PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat called the confiscation "destructive to all the efforts led by the international community...to realize the two-state solution by having a viable contiguous Palestinian state." Erekat

said building a separate road for Palestinians "facilitates...the isolation of Palestinian East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.... Such unilateral Israeli measures demonstrate yet again Israeli intentions to consolidate and expand Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, and effectively take Jerusalem off the negotiating table." Both Abbas and Erekat raised this issue in meetings with Assistant Secretary Welch and the Consul General on October 11. Abbas expressed great concern about these Israeli steps and sought USG efforts with the GoI to reverse the land confiscations.

15. (C) Mayor of Abu Dis Ibrahim Jaffal told PolOff October 9 that the municipality owns the Abu Dis land that is being confiscated and that he is looking into legal options to prevent the action. According to Jaffal, the al-Khan al-Ahmar land belongs to individuals, not to a village, and he does not know what legal action they may consider. Assistant Secretary of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Religious Affairs Salah Zuhayka told PolOff that the Ministry owns the land at Nabi Musa and intends to go to court to try to keep it.

COMMENT: ROUTE OF THE NEW ROAD  
LEAVES E-1 OPEN TO DEVELOPMENT

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16. (C) Comment: Currently, Route 1, which separate E-1 and Ma'ale Adumim, is the only east/west corridor between Jerusalem and Jericho. The land being confiscated for the new road is south of Ma'ale Adumim and the planned route of the separation barrier. According to an IDF-issued map, a Palestinian traveler from a village east of Jerusalem would travel on the new road around Ma'ale Adumim (to the south)

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and connect to Route 1 east of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc. (ConGen will make the IDF-issued map available to NEA/IPA.) While the new road would allow "transportation contiguity" between Abu Dis and Jericho, it is not clear that Israeli plans would allow Palestinians to travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank without a long detour around the Ma'ale Adumim bloc.

17. (C) The new road will permit the GoI to eliminate Palestinian access to Route 1 near E-1 and Ma'ale Adumim. This step would facilitate the potential development of E-1 and connect Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem with an uninterrupted string of Israeli settlements. Land confiscations for the separation barrier around Ma'ale Adumim and E-1 and the development of the road system in E-1 (see Refs A-C) suggest the recent confiscations are part of a larger Israeli plan to ensure that the entire area within the planned route of the separation barrier around the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc is permanently tied to Jerusalem, effectively cutting the West Bank in half. End Comment.

WALLES